

This is BILK 41 for May 1991 - Address is Ulrich Magin - Stuhlbruderhofstr. 4 - W-6704 Mutterstadt - Germany. Sub rates are DM 15 for 6 issues.

BEHEMOTH

- Hollywood, Florida. German newspapers (Rheinpfalz, 28 Feb; Rhein-Zeitung, 28 Feb, p.7) reported that Nessie had been caught in Florida. Not quite. Several citizens had observed a 2m/ 7 ft "monster lizard" in a Florida lake. The creature eliminated the duck population of the lake and sometimes basked on the shores of Pembroke Pines Reservoir near Hollywood. Todd Hardwick managed to bait the "Loch Ness monster" with chicken meat and found it was a rare Southeastern Asia-monitor lizard. The animal was brought to Miami. It was suggested that the creature had been a pet and was exposed by its owner.
- Thailand: Gerard van Leusden has sent me an interesting article from the Japanese Journal of Ichthyology vol. 37, no. 3, 1990, on the discovery of a freshwater ray in Chao Phraya River. Supap Monkolprasit and Tyson R Roberts report they first heard about "giant freshwater rays" from newspaper articles in 1983, but since 1987 have obtained three specimens from Thailand. So this was an important cryptozoological discovery where sightings preceeded the actual catch. But note that it only took four years to prove the ray's existence (article's title: Himantura chaophraya, a New Giant Freshwater Stingray from Thailand).
- Short Bits: The "BASF information", 27 March, p.4, has a short article on a swimming golf course on Lake Coeur d'Arlène in Idaho. This is a monster lake, and perhaps sightings of the beastie might add to the fun of playing golf there. - The INFO Journal 62, Feb 91, pp. 5 - 8, has an interesting report on an Amerindian cave painting that resembles a flying pterandon very much, though the left wing looks more like a three-humped lake monster. However, this is the most interesting case of "ancient dinosaur painting" that I have seen.

ISIS

- de Sarre: Francois de Sarre has sent me another articke of his, "La Theorie de la Bipédie initiale", part 2, from the French mag 3^e Millenaire, no. 13, 34 - 50. On page 42, he describes the hypothetical aquatic hominid from which all animals and men are descandants. This aquatic mini-person, if it existed and developped, might explain hominid mermen.
- Switzerland: When the Swiss doctor Scheuchzer discovered the fossilized remains of a giant salamander in 1726, he thought he had found the skeleton of a sinner drowned in Noah's flood. This fossil, together with the largest preserved specimen of a giant salamander from China (160 cm) were on exhibition in Emmenbrücke, Switzerland, until April 28. (Neue Zürcher Zeitung April 12, p.9). Scheuchzer's mistake inspired Czech writer Carol Capek early in the 20th century to write a very funny and thoughtful satire on social conflict, in which intelligent, talking, man-like salamanders wage war against mankind.

LEVIATHAN

- Bangladesh: I don't know if this story is simply folklore, as I have covered several vesions of it, always from the general area of the Philippines and Central America, in my Bilks, and I recall another vesion of it was published in Rickard/Michell's Living Wonders. The story goes like this: sailor falls overboard, giant marine turtle surfaces and carries him for days until he is rescued by a ship. This curious mixture between sea monster and handkind dolphin is an all-time press favourite, and if I find time, I'll give a list of all instances reported so farin next Bilk. In this case, from the Arab News, March 4, p.?, the turtles was a small one, but I nevertheless copy the report in toto: "Friendly turtle. Chittagong, March 3 (AP) - A South Korean sailor who fell off his ship grabbed a passing turtle and hung on for dear life until he was resued six hours later. Lim Kang-Yong, 28, said he fell on the slippery deck of the May Star, a South Korean ship, at dawn on Feb. 22 and tumbled into the Bay of Bengal about 130 kilometers of Chittagong. Waves swept him away. Lim's crewmates said the spotted

him six hours later on the back of a turtle. They used a crane fitted with a fishing net to pull Lim and the turtle from the sea. 'The turtle was very friendly. It did not hurt me at all', King said after reaching Chittagong Port. 'I learned from books that a turtle will keep floating if you ride on it holding its neck tight'. The May Star crew rewarded the turtle with a meal of meat and bananas before returning it to sea."

● Vietnam: The Rheinpfalz had a report on Vietnamese hopes for tourism on April 26. In Tongking Bay in the north of Vietnam, strange stone cliffs rise out of the sea. This beautiful Bay is to be turned into "our San Tropez", as a local says. Halong (= dragon) Bay, as legend has it, was created when a fire spouting dragon brought happiness to the sea at exactly that spot a million years ago before man had been created. The encounter of the fire-spouting monster and the waves created the bizarre rock formations. This is the first time I hear of fire-spouting dragons in the East. Do they already adapt to western taste? Is it, once more, folklore perverted by tourism?

● Bits: Fortean Times 56, 1990, p.59, an extract from the Gentleman's Magazine of 1749, describing a sea dragon caught off England. The engraving shows a typical jenny hanner, or sea serpent made out of a dried skate, and this was probably what was exhibited as monster. - BBC Wildlife, Jan 91, p. 11 had a short article with photo on the first sighting of a living megamouth shark of Dana Point, Cal, in October 1990. (credit: G. van Leusden)

USO

● Bits: Soviet sub in net of Polish trawler about 25 miles off Hel Peninsular in the middle of March: Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 22 March; Rhein-Zeitung 21 March. - A letter, in which I explained to INFO's president why I believed the "Soviet subs off Sweden" were due to mass panic etc, was reprinted as a letter-to-the-editor in the INFO Journal 62, p.3.

MARINE LIFE

● Sharks: A 3m mako stranded off Pass-a-Grille beach, near St Petersburg, Florida, drew huge masses of sightseers (Arab News, 4 March, p. 16) - ● Whales: early Dec 90, shoal of porpoises off Sylt, Germany (lost source); Hyanning Point, Mass, 45 pilot whales drown in tide, The Times 13 Dec 90, p. 3a; A Phocena phocoena, the smallest cetacean in European coastal waters, was caught in the mouth of Schelde river (Zoogdier, 2, 91/1, p.33, credit: G van Leusden); a new species of beaked whale, Mesoplodon peruvianis, was described in 1991. This is the 10th new species of cetacean to be discovered since 1900, the last such discovery was in 1963, according to Nature vol 350, 1991, p. 560, and BBC Wildlife March 1991, p.156. Nature adds: "There have been several sightings of a distinctive but unidentifiable species of beaked whale in the eastern tropical pacific, meaning that there still may be at least one more undescribed species of Mesoplodon". (credit: G van Leusden). From my own notes in Bilk, I had expected more discoveries of whales, as I have already reported several. The sensational report of a diver who fought against a large dolphin in a wreck of Vlissingen, in the Netherlands, in 1958, was a hoax, Zoogdier magazine (2) 91/1, p. 15, revealed (credit: G. van Leusden). ● Rest: A diver in French Polynesia shooshed away a "flesh-eating muraena" which tried to draw a woman into the depth. The diver bit the 1.20m/4ft fish which left the woman and escaped. (Rhein-Zeitung, 13 March). A 600 kilogrammes sea cow was captured in the pond of a nuclear power plant in St Lucie, Florida. The desperate animal had tried to escape several times within the last two months, and was finally caught in a 120m shark-net, and released to the sea. (Die Rheinpfalz, 6 April).

This is all for today, the next Bilk will appear in July, and I hope I will have some good news and interesting bits for you.